



Subang Jaya Buddhist Association

# Buddhism as a Psychotherapy: *Calming Mental Proliferation*



Sharing with Bro. Billy Tan



# Synopsis



Explore teachings of the Buddha from a scientific perspective:

- ⌘ Emotional arousal and reaction give rise to two kinds of suffering: Physical, and Mental;
- ⌘ Mental proliferation lead to grief, lamentation, pain, depression, and exhaustion;
- ⌘ Understand how the mind proliferates;
- ⌘ Learn how to calm mental proliferation and lead a more peaceful and happier life.



# TWO KINDS OF SUFFERING

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Emotional arousal and reaction give rise to two kinds of suffering: Physical, and Mental;

Samyutta Nikaya 36:6 – Sallatha Sutta :  
“The Dart”



## SALLATHA SUTTA: "The Dart"

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- "...what is the distinction, the diversity, the difference that exists herein between a **well-taught noble disciple** and an **untaught worldling**?"
- "...an **untaught worldling**: when touched by a painful (bodily) feeling, he worries and grieves, he laments, beats his breast, weeps and is distraught. So he experiences two kinds of feeling: a bodily and a mental feeling."



# SALLATHA SUTTA: "The Dart"



## Untrained Mind:

- "Having been touched by that **painful feeling**, he resists (and reacts) to it. Then in him who so resists (and reacts) that painful feeling, an underlying tendency of resistance against that painful feeling comes to overwhelm (his mind). Under the impact of that painful feeling he then proceeds to **enjoy sensual gratification...**"
- "While experiencing painful feeling, he seeks **delight in sensual pleasure.**

For what reason?

Because the untrained worldling **does not know** of any escape from painful feeling other than sensual pleasure."



# SALLATHA SUTTA: "The Dart"



## Trained Mind:

- "...in the case of a **well-taught noble disciple...** he will not worry nor grieve and lament... It is one kind of feeling he experiences, **a bodily one, but not a mental feeling.**"
- "...he does not resist (and react) it... Under the impact of that painful feeling **he does not proceed to enjoy sensual gratification.**"
- "He **understands** the arising and ending of those feelings, and the gratification, the danger and the escape connected with these feelings..."

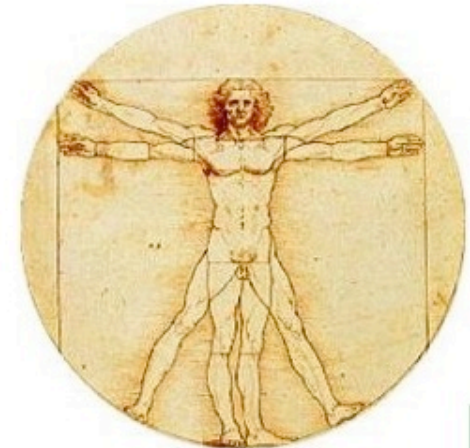


# MENTAL EXPERIENCE



## THREE PARTS OF MENTAL EXPERIENCES:

- **Viññāna** : Product of the Process of Perception
  - what is perceived through the sense organs;
- **Mano** : Cognitive Process ("intellect")
  - categorized interpretation of perception giving meaning to what was perceived;
- **Citta** : Affective Process ("emotions")
  - arousal of emotion leading to mental proliferation;
  - personalizing the experience with the notion there is a "self" to be affected.





# PROCESS OF EXPERIENCE



❖ Experience is a Chain-Reaction:

*"Dukkha"*



*"Pañca-khandha"*

**"Stressor"**



Tension In The Body

PERCEPTION  
*("Viññāna")*

STIMULUS



COGNITIVE PROCESS  
*("Mano")*

AFFECTIVE PROCESS  
*("Citta")*

*Physiological Disturbance*

Bio-Chemical Reaction of the Organism

Unconscious Emotional Arousal  
*("Tanhā")*

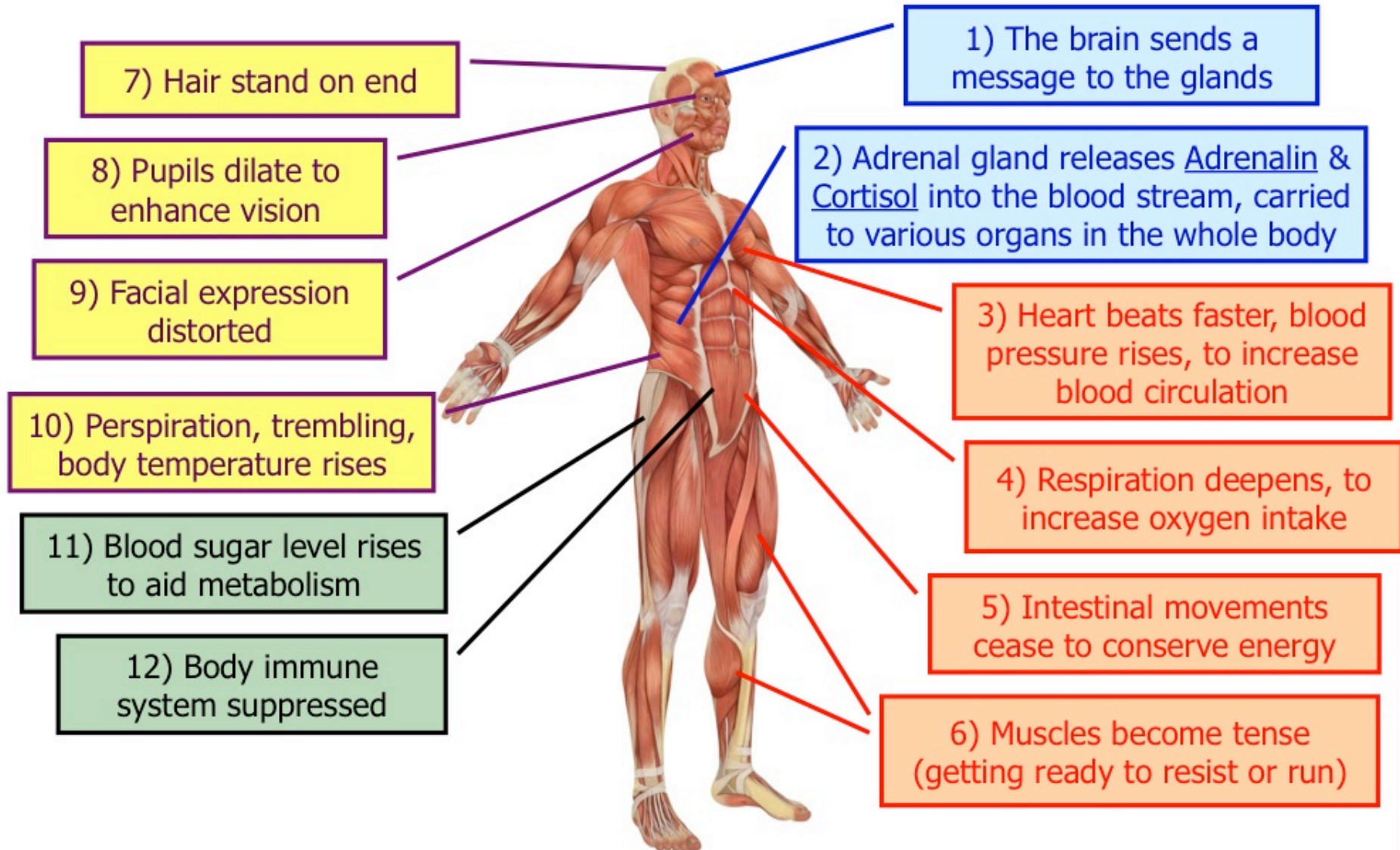
**("STRESS")**

- **Grief**  
*(sōka)*
- **Lamentation**  
*(paridēva)*





# FIGHT OR FLIGHT REACTION

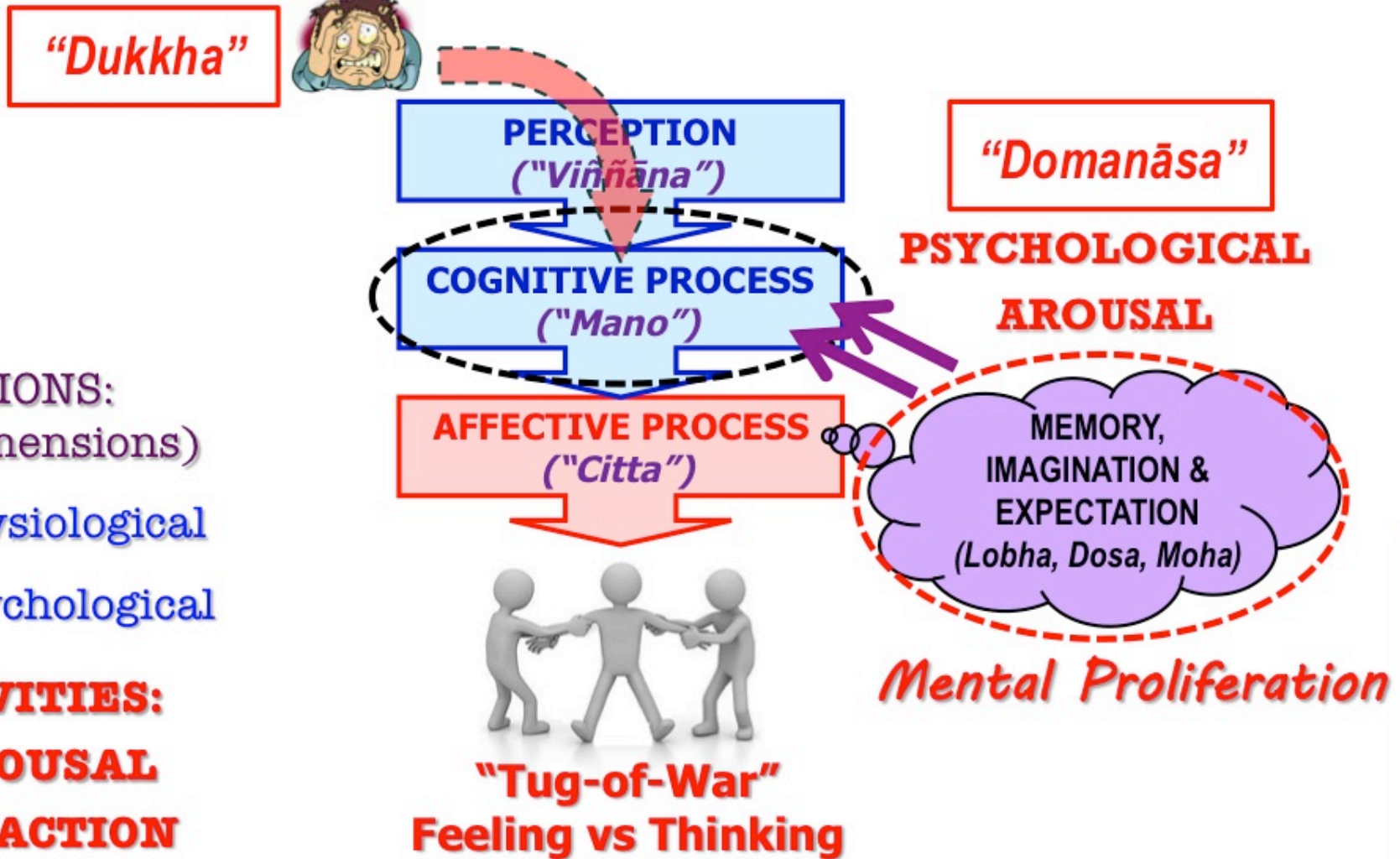




# WHAT ARE EMOTIONS?



❖ Experience is a Chain-Reaction:



EMOTIONS:  
( 2 dimensions)

- ❖ Physiological
- ❖ Psychological

**ACTIVITIES:**

- **AROUSAL**
- **REACTION**

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white long-sleeved blouse, stands in a lush green field filled with yellow wildflowers. She has her arms raised and her head tilted back, looking up towards the sky with a serene expression. The background is filled with dense green trees and foliage, suggesting a peaceful, natural setting. The overall atmosphere is one of tranquility and connection with nature.

What Is "Peace of Mind"?

**A Mind Free From  
Mental Proliferation!**



# FREEDOM FROM MENTAL PROLIFERATION



## 1. RELAX THE BODY: *Conscious Relaxation*

- Bio-chemical activities gradually subside;
- Tension in the body eases;
- Mind no longer disturbed by tension in the body.

*A relaxed body is a necessary condition for a calm mind!*

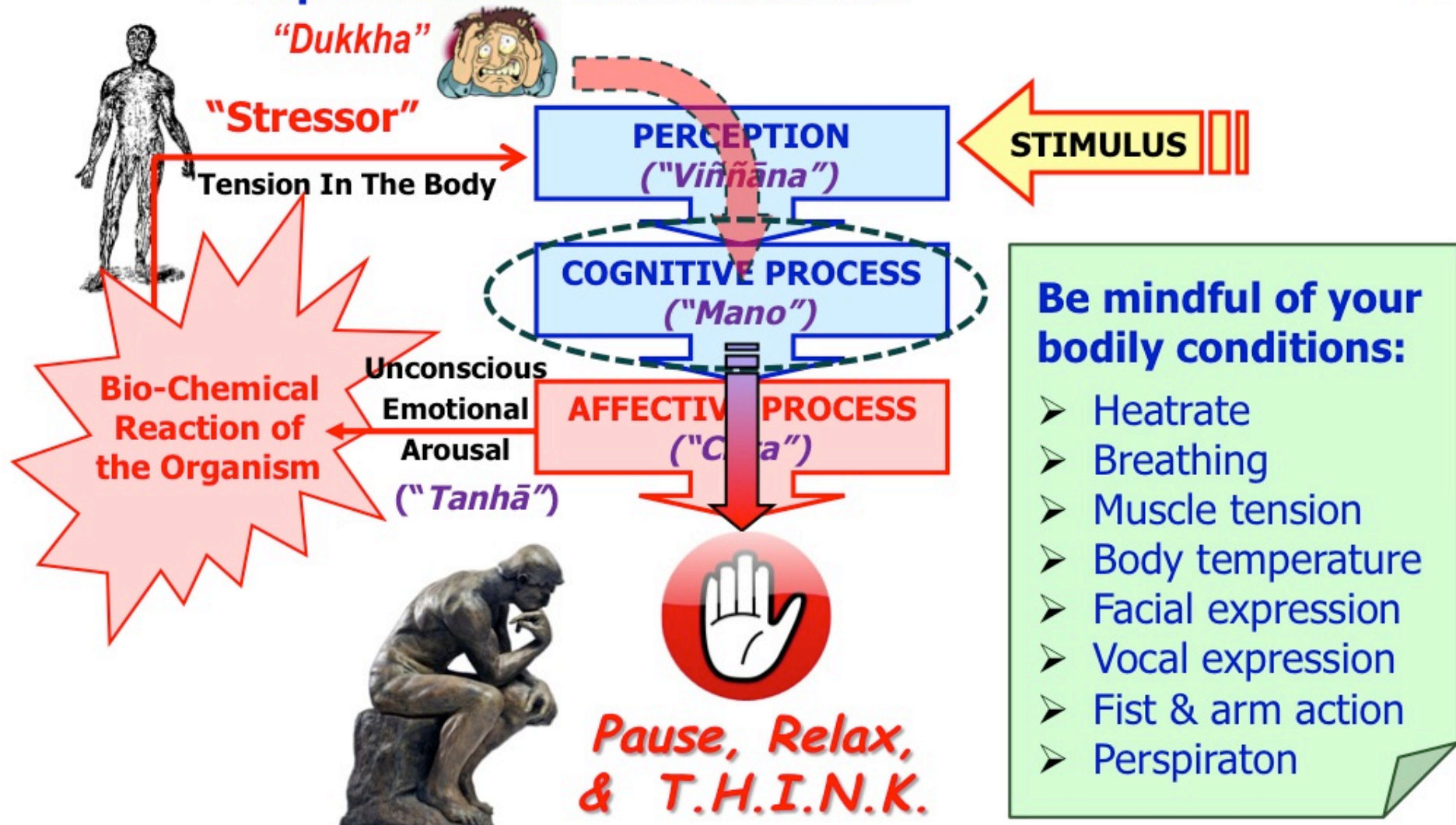
## 2. CALM THE MIND: *Introspective Attention*

- Relaxed body suggests absence of threats;
- Conscious focused attention;
- Examine your thinking – challenge your thinking;
- No mental proliferation – mind calms down;
- No further arousal of bio-chemical reactions.



# PROCESS OF EXPERIENCE

❖ Experience is a Chain-Reaction:



# T.H.I.N.K. before you act or speak



T

**Is it Truthful**

H

**Is this Helpful**



I



**Will it Improve the situation**



N

**Is this really Necessary**

K

**Is it a Kind act or speech**





# WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

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By remaining calm and relaxed, we have 3 “windows of opportunities” to overcome stress:

1. Do something to change our circumstances;
2. Change the way we perceive our circumstances (perspective);
3. Change how we respond to challenges.

# **Vitakka Vicāra** observation and inference



**Challenge Your Thinking**





# THE 10 "THINKING TRAPS"



1. Reading other people's mind ?
2. Letting **FEELINGS** and self-centered emotions guide your decision ?  
(Cognitive Dissonance)
3. Predicting the Future ? (**I**magination)
4. Living in the past ? (**M**emory)
5. Expecting perfection ? (**E**xpectation)  
( "IME" Syndrome )



## THE 10 "THINKING TRAPS"

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6. Blaming others ? (Blame)
7. Blaming yourself ? (Shame)
8. Black or White thinking ? (Extremism)
9. Magnifying the **Negative** aspects,  
or overlooking the **Positive** aspects ?
10. Comparing, and/or competing ?

**"Cognitive Distortions" by Aaron Beck, Albert Ellis, et al**



## TWO KINDS OF THOUGHTS

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Mental proliferation lead to fear, panic, anxiety, frustration, anger, stress and suffering;

Majjhima Nikaya 19 – Dvedhavitakka Sutta:  
“Two Kinds of Thoughts”

- Wholesome vs unwholesome thoughts;
- Excessive thinking leads to mental proliferation.



# LAW OF ATTENTION



## Majjhima Nikaya 19 – Dvedhavitakka Sutta:

- “Bhikkhus, whatever a Bhikkhu frequently thinks and ponders over, **the mind will be inclined towards it**.
- If he frequently thinks and ponders over **passionate thoughts**, he has abandoned dispassion, and the mind is inclined more towards passionate thoughts.
- Similarly, if he frequently thinks and ponders over **angry thoughts**, he has abandoned kindness, and the mind is inclined more towards anger.
- Or if he frequently thinks and ponders over **cruel thoughts**, he has abandoned peacefulness, and his mind becomes inclined more towards thoughts of cruelty.



# WATCHFUL, ALERT, VIGILANT



## Majjhima Nikaya 19 – Dvedhavitakka Sutta:

- This way I saw the danger, futility and confusion in unwholesome mental states, and I saw the **advantage of cultivating wholesome mental states.**
- As I dwelt thus: watchful, alert, and vigilant, a thought of dispassion (...renunciation, ...kindness) arose in me. Then I recognized, this thought of dispassion has arisen in me.
- **This does not lead me to my own harm, to others harm, or to the harm of both. It promotes intelligence, it supports constructiveness, and it leads me to Nibbana.**



# DISCERN YOUR THOUGHTS



## Discern & Differentiate your thoughts.

### POSITIVE THOUGHTS:

- I. Wholesome** – free of evil or malicious intent;
- II. Praised and Practiced by the Wise** – kind and benevolent;
- III. Blameless** – when manifested does not cause strife or suffering to others;
- IV. Resourceful** – when developed and undertaken leads to wellness, peace, and happiness to self and others.

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white long-sleeved blouse, stands in a lush green field filled with yellow wildflowers. She has her arms raised and her head tilted back, looking up towards the sky with a serene expression. The background is a dense line of green trees under bright, natural light.

CONCLUSION:

*Freedom From  
Mental Suffering!*

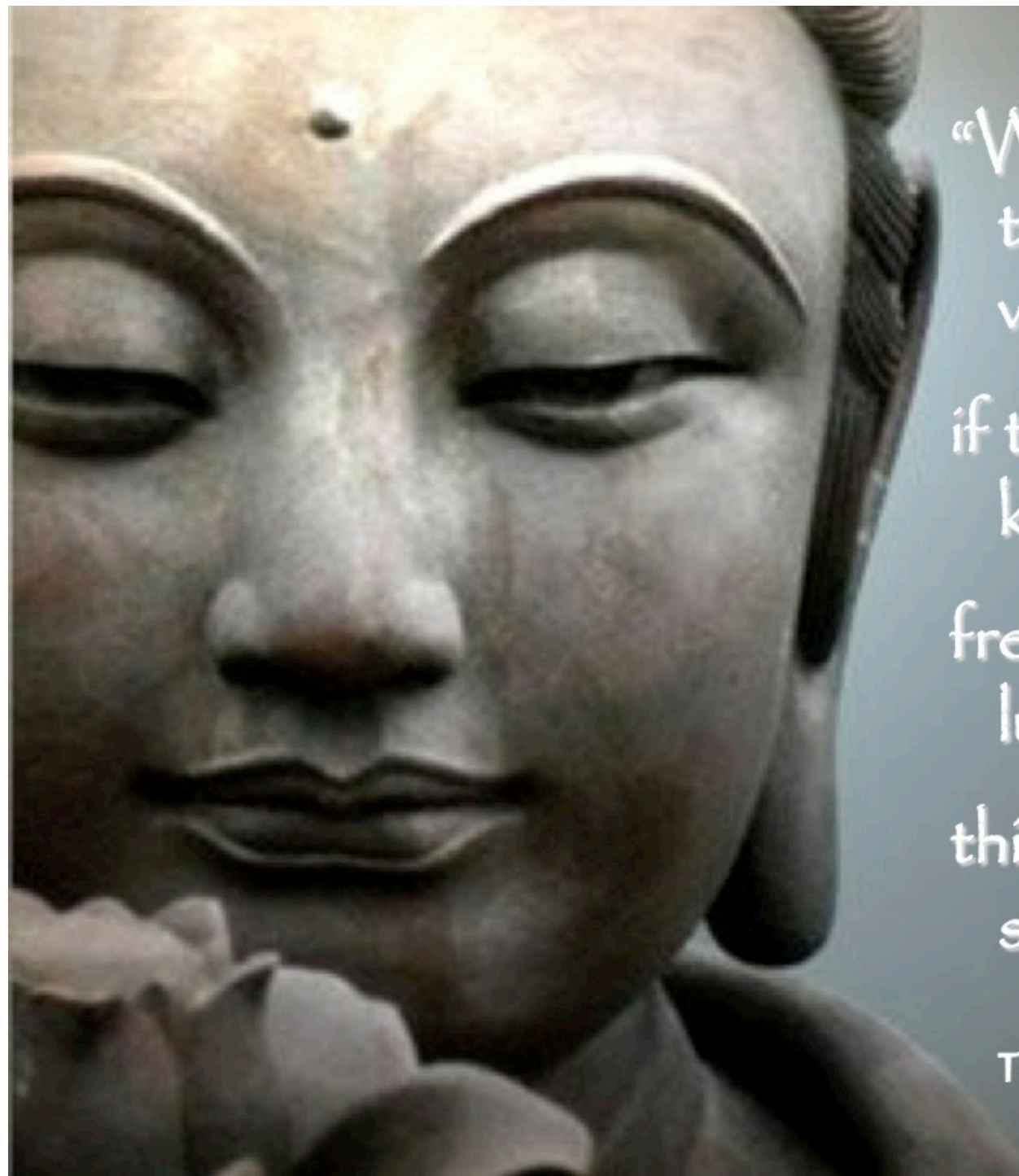


# CALMING MENTAL PROLIFERATION



- ① **Be mindful of bodily conditions**
- ② **Pause, Relax, & T.H.I.N.K.**
- ③ **3 Windows of opportunity:**
  - ✓ Change our circumstances;
  - ✓ Change how we perceive our circumstances;
  - ✓ Change how we respond to challenges.
- ④ **Challenge Your Thinking**  
**X 10 "Thinking Traps" (cognitive distortions)**
- ⑤ **Discern positive vs negative thoughts**





“When faced with  
the changing  
vicissitudes of life,  
if the mind can be  
kept undisturbed,  
free from worry,  
lust, and fear,  
this is the  
supreme bliss.”

*The Buddha (Mangala Sutta)*

**QUESTIONS?**



For enquiries, questions, update info:  
**[billy.tan@hotmail.com](mailto:billy.tan@hotmail.com)**